

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00
DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01
PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00
SSM-03 ACDA-12 OMB-01 /087 W
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O 231341Z DEC 77

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3392

INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EG IS XF

SUBJECT: GOE UPBEAT BUT FIRM ON PEACE PROCESS

REFS: (A) CAIRO 22580, (B) CAIRO 22584

SUMMARY. FIRMNESS EDGED OUT OPTIMISM FOR SPACE IN
DEC 23 DAILIES. COVERAGE STRESSES EGYPT INSISTS ON TOTAL
WITHDRAWAL, PALESTINIAN STATE AND ARABISM OF JERUSALEM.
EGYPTIAN SPOKESMAN SAYS LEASE OF SHARM EL SHEIKH OUT OF
QUESTION. SADAT SAYS ISRAELIS CAN RETURN TO ARROGANCE
ONLY AT THEIR OWN RISK AND WAR OPTION CAN BE REASSERTED
IF NECESSARY. ABOVE TEMPERED BY COPIOUS EXPRESSIONS OF
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OPTIMISM FROM BOTH ISRAELIS AND EGYPTIANS HERE, WITH
EGYPTIANS PREDICTING GREATER CONCESSIONS BY BEGIN THAN
ANNOUNCED AFTER U.S. VISIT. CAIRO CONFERENCE ADJOURNED.
GOE CONCERN THAT BEGIN CHRISTMAS PACKAGE
GOING TO BE INADEQUATE COMES THROUGH FORCEFULLY. END
SUMMARY.

1. FIRMNESS. AHRAH AND AKHBAR HIGHLIGHTED ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SADAT WILL CONVENE EGYPTIAN NSC DEC 24 IN PREPARATION FOR MEETING WITH BEGIN. BANNERS PLAY UP EGYPT'S VIEWPOINT: PEACE BASED ON JUSTICE MEANS TOTAL ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL, ESTABLISHMENT PALESTINIAN STATE, RESTORATION OF ARAB CHARACTER OF JERUSALEM AND RIGHT OF ALL STATES TO SECURE EXISTENCE.

2. MORE FROM SADAT. SADAT TOLD STERN THAT THERE WILL BE NO SEPARATE AGREEMENT: "EGYPT NEEDS PEACE, BUT NOT AT ANY PRICE." HIS VISIT TO JERUSALEM MEANT WILLINGNESS TO ACCEPT ISRAEL AS MIDDLE EAST NATION "BUT DOES NOT SIGNIFY RECOGNITION OF JERUSALEM AS CAPITAL OF ISRAEL." IF KNESSET WERE IN TEL AVIV, SADAT WOULD HAVE GONE THERE INSTEAD. MILITARY OPTION REMAINS OPEN IF PEACE EFFORTS FAIL. ACCORDING SADAT, HE HAD AGREED WITH ISRAELIS NOT TO EXCHANGE THREATS OF WAR "BUT IF THIS DECISION PROVES TO BE WRONG, THERE WILL EMERGE A NEW SITUATION. . . WE ARE COMPLETELY ENTITLED TO LIBERATE OUR COUNTRY AT ANY TIME. THIS IS A FACT AND IF ISRAEL PURSUES ITS OLD POLICY OF ARROGANCE THEY WILL BE THE LOSERS." SADAT ALSO SAID ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS PERIPHERAL ISSUE WHICH WOULD BE SOLVED AUTOMATICALLY AFTER CENTRAL PROBLEM RESOLVED.

3. SHARM EL SHEIKH. OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN AT CAIRO CONFERENCE SAID LEASE OF SHARM EL SHEIKH NOT A MATTER FOR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DISCUSSION. "LEASE IS OUT OF THE QUESTION."

4. EDITORIALS. AHRAH SUSPICIOUS OF BEGIN'S CLAIM THAT ALL ISSUES NEGOTIABLE AND WONDERED IF THIS MEANT HE WOULD TRY TO DRAG OUT OR STALL PEACE PROCESS, WHICH WOULD BE "EXTREMELY DANGEROUS." AKHBAR REITERATED THAT INTERNATIONAL FRONTIERS AND PRINCIPLE OF SOVEREIGNTY SACRED. "ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS CANNOT REMAIN IN OCCUPIED ARAB LANDS AND THERE WILL BE NO LEASE OF SHARM EL SHEIKH OR NEGOTIATIONS ON TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY." GUMHURIYYA NOTED FIRM SADAT OPPOSITION TO MAINTENANCE OF ISRAELI MILITARY PRESENCE IN WEST BANK AND GAZA. "ISRAEL SEEMS TO BE STILL CAPTIVE TO ITS OLD IDEAS ON SECURITY THROUGH MILITARY MIGHT, CONTINUOUS EXPANSION AND SEIZURE OF OTHER PEOPLE'S LAND."

5. OPTIMISM. AS IF TO TEMPER FIRMNESS, PRESS ALSO FEATURED OPTIMISTIC REPORTS FROM "INFORMED SOURCES" AT CAIRO CONFERENCE, WHO PREDICTED SADAT-BEGIN TALKS WILL RESULT IN NEW POSITION MORE RESPONSIVE TO ARAB DEMANDS THAN POSITIONS BEGIN DECLARED DURING RECENT VISIT TO WASHINGTON. GUMHURIYYA REPORTED "RECENT COMMUNICATIONS"

AND WEIZMAN VISIT INDICATED BEGIN WILL GO BEYOND PREVIOUS
STANCE ON PALESTINIAN PROBLEM, WITHDRAWAL AND PEACE
ARRANGEMENTS. ACCORDING ALL INDICATIONS, STORY CONTINUED,
CHRISTMAS DISCUSSIONS WILL RESULT IN JOINT DECLARATION
OF INTENTIONS WHICH WILL BE NEW BOOST TO CAIRO CONFERENCE
NEGOTIATIONS. "U.S. OFFICIAL SOURCES" ALSO MAINTAINED
THAT POINTS CARTER DISCUSSED WITH BEGIN WERE NO LONGER
BASIS OF ISRAELI POSITION. PRESIDENT HAD TOLD BEGIN THESE
POINTS WOULD NOT MEET MINIMAL EGYPTIAN DEMANDS AND BEGIN

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PROMISED RECONSIDER ISRAELI POSITION.

6. IN OPEN LETTER TO BEGIN, AHRAH EDITOR HAMDY GAMAL WROTE
THAT, DESPITE HIS HARD LINE AND INFLEXIBLE RECORD, BEGIN
WILL LIVE UP TO THE MAGNITUDE OF PRESIDENT SADAT'S HISTORIC
INITIATIVE AND RESPOND FAVORABLY TO THE CALL FOR PEACE.
IT TRUE THAT BEGIN KNESSET REPLY TO SADAT'S SPEECH HAD
NOT MET EXPECTATIONS. HOWEVER, "WHEN BEGIN SAYS EVERYTHING
IS NEGOTIABLE, THIS MEANS A LOT, EVEN MORE THAN MANY
OPTIMISTS WOULD IMAGINE." WHILE MANY DOUBT THAT BEGIN

CAN RISE TO THE OCCASION, ACCORDING GAMAL, HE NOW HOLDS
HIGHEST POLITICAL OFFICE IN ISRAEL, WHICH HAS IMPOSED UPON
HIM STATESMANLY BEHAVIOR. "I AM CONFIDENT FOR FIRST TIME
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IN THIRTY YEARS WE ARE ON PROPER ROAD TO PEACE."

7. CAIRO CONFERENCE. CONFERENCE ADJOURNED DEC 22 TO A
DATE TO BE DETERMINED DURING BEGIN VISIT. ATMOSPHERE
HIGHLY POSITIVE AND PRESS FOUND "MARKED AND TANGIBLE
PROGRESS" DESPITE DIFFERENCES. EGYPT AND ISRAEL CON-
DUCTING DISCUSSIONS DIRECTLY WITH ONLY OCCASIONAL AMERICAN
INTERVENTION. ISRAELI DELEGATION EXPRESSED AT DEC 22
MEETING THEIR "HAPPINESS AND PROFOUND EMOTION" AT WARM
WELCOME THEY HAVE RECEIVED HERE.

8. COMMENT. REASSERTION OF EGYPTIAN FIRMNESS, PAR-
TICULARLY SADAT'S REFERENCES TO WAR OPTION FOR WHAT WE
BELIEVE IS FIRST TIME SINCE JERUSALEM TRIP, SUGGEST GOE
INCREASINGLY CONCERNED THAT BEGIN'S CHRISTMAS PROPOSALS
ARE GOING TO FALL FAR SHORT OF EGYPT'S MINIMAL REQUIRE-
MENTS. EILTS

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